

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BRITISH TUC CONGRESS OPENS IN BLACKPOOL

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. NEARLY 1,000 DELEGATES REPRESENTING OVER TEN MILLION MEMBERS, AS WELL AS NUMEROUS FOREIGN AND LOCAL GUESTS, ASSEMBLED IN BLACKPOOL SEPTEMBER 3 AS JOSEPH CRAWFORD, CHAIRMAN, FORMALLY OPENED THE BRITISH TUC 105TH ANNUAL CONGRESS. KEY ACTIONS BY THE CONGRESS OF THE OPENING DAY INCLUDED:
(A) EXPULSION OF 20 AFFILIATES, PREVIOUSLY SUSPENDED, FOR REGISTERING UNDER THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, AND
(B) REJECTION OF EFFORTS BY SOME TUC LEADERS TO HAVE THE TUC TERMINATE ITS TALKS WITH THE GOVERNMENT

2. EXPULSION OF 20 UNIONS - DESPITE APPEALS FROM FIVE OF THE 20 UNIONS RECOMMENDED FOR EXPULSION BY THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL BECAUSE THEY HAD REGISTERED UNDER THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, THE CONGRESS OVERWHELMINGLY VOTED FOR EXPULSION. (THE 20 UNIONS REPRESENT 360,000 WORKERS, OR ABOUT 4 PERCENT OF THE TUC'S MEMBERSHIP.) IN THEIR APPEALS, LEADERS OF THE ACTORS' UNION AND THE AIRLINE PILOTS' UNION VAINLY, ALTHOUGH ELOQUENTLY, ARGUED THAT THEIR UNIONS' LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SURVIVAL DEPENDED ON REGISTRATION UNDER THE LAW. THE

CONGRESS REJECTED THE ARGUMENTS AND TUC GENSEC VICTOR FEATHER EVEN SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY THAT OTHER UNIONS MIGHT LATER CONDUCT RAIDS ON THEIR MEMBERSHIP IF THESE ORGANIZATIONS MAINTAINED THEIR REGISTERED STATUS.

3. HOWEVER, DESPITE THIS ACTION, THE CONGRESS REJECTED A PROPOSAL STRONGLY URGED BY HUGH SCANLON, AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING WORKERS' UNION, AND SUPPORTED BY JACK JONES, TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION, WHICH WOULD HAVE PREVENTED TUC AFFILIATES FROM EVEN DEFENDING THEMSELVES UNDER THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, I.E., BY INTERDICTING THEM FROM APPEARING BEFORE OR BEING REPRESENTED AT THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COURT. DESPITE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ACT BY SCANLON AS A "BLACK LEG CHARTER," TO BE SHUNNED COMPLETELY, OTHER LEADERS SUCH AS SIR SIDNEY GREENE, NATIONAL UNION OF RAILWAYMEN AND TOM JACKSON, OF THE POSTAL WORKERS', ARGUED SUCCESSFULLY BEFORE THE CONGRESS THAT "DEFENSIVE ACTION" UNDER THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT WAS ESSENTIAL.

4. A CONTINUATION OF THE ECONOMIC TALKS - ON THE OTHER HAND, WHILE ACCEPTING SCANLON'S CALL FOR A TOTAL BOYCOTT OF THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS MACHINERY, THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION, LED BY JACK JONES, OPPOSED WITHDRAWAL FROM THE TUC-GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC TALKS. THE CONGRESS VOTED AGAINST THE SCANLON WITHDRAWAL PROPOSAL BUT ISSUE MAY COME UP AGAIN DURING A SUBSEQUENT CONGRESS SESSION.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE CONGRESS THUS FAR HAS REJECTED THE EXTREMIST POSITION EXEMPLIFIED BY THE SCANLON VIEW, SEVERAL SPEAKERS INCLUDING THE TUC CHAIRMAN CRAWFORD, MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THE TUC IS TOTALLY OPPOSED TO THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, AND, IN FACT, CONSIDER IT - FOR THE MOST PART - A "DEAD LETTER."

6. MOREOVER, A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS IN BLACKPOOL ARE CONVINCED THAT WHILE THE TALKS ARE NOW LIKELY TO CONTINUE, THEY MAY BREAK DOWN LATER BECAUSE OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEEP DIVERSIONS OF VIEW BETWEEN THE TUC AND THE GOVERNMENT.

7. IN THE MEANWHILE, SOME OF THE TUC MODERATES BELIEVE THAT TACTICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO GIANT UNIONS OF THE LEFT, SCANLON'S AUEW, JONES' TGWU, ARE RESULTING IN A GAIN FOR MODERATION AND THAT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE DIFSERENCES BETWEEN THEM MAY BE LIKELY TO GROW.

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